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VISITATION TIME — Janie Harper (left) entertains her visitor Bob Gulley (right) with a story while her husband, Bernie, joins in the fun. Gulley, a deacon at Village Meadows Baptist Church, devotes his free time as a retiree to visiting senior adult members recuperating at local health care centers. (BP photo by Jim Veneman)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

Arson hits church

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Pastor convinced stewardship paved way

SIERRA VISTA, Ariz. (BP)— "Our relationship to God has a lot to do with who is in charge and what we do with our resources," Mark Pitts reflected recently. As pastor of Village Meadows Church in Sierra Vista, Ariz., Pitts said he has found the matter of lifestyle stewardship to be "an experiencing God thing."

While many might view the congregation at Village Meadows as well above average in stewardship maturity, Pitts continually looks for ways

to challenge himself and other church members to the highest standards.

The recent announcement of "How Much Is Enough? 30 Days to Personal Revival," a Southern Baptist emphasis for the first quarter of the year 2000, for example, prompted Pitts to say, "I want it, and I want it now."

Pitts said the congregation had a strong orientation to stewardship of time, individual talents and financial resources before he became pastor less than three years ago. But the most recent evidence of stewardship consciousness has come related to building needs.

Having outgrown their church facility several times, the congregation now needs space beyond the capacity of the church campus. Averaging 300 persons in worship and 220 in Bible study, building expansion has gone as far as available land will permit.

An added early Sunday morning worship service in a sanctuary built in 1994 now exceeds attendance of the original service, though the worship style for the services is identical.

Following proven growth patterns, Village Meadows' second service hit 80% of capacity, bringing worship attendance for the two services to a total of 350. When the second service reached the 80% mark, attendance predictably dropped.

The month before, a one-day, intensive "Successful Christian Financial Management" course was taught by Bill May, president of the Arizona Church Growth Board.

The seminar material, published by LifeWay Christian Resources, teaches a biblically based philosophy of money. Course content includes how to get out of debt and stay out of debt, how to develop and live within a budget and how to retire comfortably. A plan is provided for savings, living expenses, debt and future planning needs after the tithe, taxes, and social security have been subtracted from one's income.

As a result of the study, the church gained 15 new tithers. By the end of March 1998, the congregation had agreed to enter the capital stewardship campaign, with goal levels of

\$440,000, \$550,000, and \$660,000. The congregation exceeded the top goal, pledging \$683,000.

"God gave us a plan that I didn't know about until it was in progress. I do understand now we are where we are because of those stewardship emphases," Pitts said.

Materials for "How Much Is Enough?" will be available in mid-May this year. The emphasis combines the resources of five Southern Baptist Convention agencies. LifeWay is coordinating the program and producing the emphasis resources.

Looking back

10 years ago

William Carey College (WCC) President Ralph Noonkester says that despite rumors, WCC has no intention of closing its Gulf Coast campus. WCC is currently in the midst of two inquiries, one by the Association of Colleges and Schools, and the second by the Miss. Baptist Education Commission.

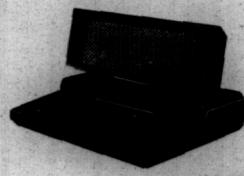
20 years ago

Charles Myers, pastor of Alta Woods Church, Jackson, is appointed chairman of the resolutions committee for the Southern Baptist Convention's annual session in Houston, Tex., on June 12-14, 1979. SBC president Jimmy Allen appointed Myers and nine others to the committee.

50 years ago

James Fancher of Louisville is elected president of the Baptist Student Union at Mississippi College, one of the school's largest and most important organizations. Fancher is a junior and will take over duties for his senior year. James Merritt of Hattiesburg is the current president.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Food for thought on Tax Day

April 15. With apologies to President Roosevelt, another day which will live in infamy.

So dreaded is the prospect of Tax Day that vast numbers of us resort to waiting until the final hours are draining away before we put pencil to paper and begin the arduous process of rendering unto Caesar.

News media love to cover the midnight filers with comical stories of procrastinating as long as possible before settling up with Uncle Sam.

It's interesting that people are so flippant (or resigned, as the case may be) to handing over so much of their hard-earned treasure to the various governments that extract income taxes from us each year.

Maybe those people wouldn't be so flippant if they understood more clearly that the confiscatory level of taxes they pay each year are made even higher, due to some special tax breaks granted to the most politically-connected group in the country.

Yes, thanks to our elected lawmakers, while you're paying your full load of state and national income taxes, gamblers get to write off their losses in much the same profit/loss manner as business owners and the self-employed.

Buried on page 12 of the State of Mississippi's current instruction manual for filling out line seven of Schedule A for itemized deductions is this statement: "Gambling losses are claimed on this line."

Also included on page 10 of the same instruction manual, this time dealing with the subject of other credit(s) against income on line 27 of the state individual tax return form, is a provision allowing owners of gambling licenses to write off the fees associated with their licenses.

Not to be outdone, the U.S. Congress also permits gamblers to count their losses against federal income tax as "other miscellaneous deductions" on line 27 of IRS Form 1040.

Paul Jones, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Action Commission, doesn't think such tax giveaways are a good idea.

"I am repulsed by the idea that gamblers can write off expenditures for what promoters of the industry openly describe as 'entertainment.' I know of no other 'entertainment' enterprise that receives such favored tax treatment.

"I can't play an 'entertaining' round of golf or take a vacation and write it off my taxes. An alcoholic cannot write off the expenses of his highly-addictive form of 'entertainment,' so why do addicted gamblers get such a lucrative break?" he asks.

"The tax laws of this state and nation have been completely convoluted in an effort to legitimize that which is blatantly illegitimate. This is further evidence of political manipulation by the gambling cartels whose every contact with legislators, state and national, is self-serving and self-promoting — and they've got the money to get what they want from politicians," he says.

"The fact that the State of Mississippi, perceived far and wide as the poorest state in the nation with some of the highest tax burdens on its people, would grant special tax privi-

Note: This booklet does not contain tax forms.

1998 1040

Instructions

Including Instructions for Schedules A, B, C, D, E, F, J, and SE

Note: satirical reproduction

leges only to gamblers is evidence that when a state legalizes gambling, it indeed makes losers of all its citizens," Jones points out.

As you sit in that long post office line tonight, pondering how in the world you're going to pay your tax bills this year and still feed your family, you might want to think about that.

tists are here, because we care."

I am grateful that I belong to a church that has always supported the Cooperative Program, a church that long ago outgrew the ingrown attitude of "me, myself, and I."

I am glad that I am a member of a church that is committed to give at least a tithe of its budget.

Our church currently gives 11% to the Cooperative Program, with the intention of increasing that percentage annually toward the 15% mark.

I concur with my pastor, Randy Turner, when he states, "I thank God that he has called me to pastor a church with such a giving spirit and a great heart for missions."

Indeed, the Scopers are grateful for a pastor who is the role model and the example we need in terms of his personal generosity, accountability, and a responsibility to acknowledge needs that are out there beyond our beautiful place of worship.

The Cooperative Program represents purposeful giving, doing together with our Baptist churches what would be impossible to do as the First Baptist Church of Laurel.

I praise God for this opportunity!

GUEST OPINION



The wonder of the Cooperative Program

By Dell Scoper, member
First Church, Laurel

AFTER 2,000
YEARS,
PEOPLE
AROUND
THE
WORLD
STILL NEED

I am personally grateful for this financial channel of cooperation between my state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, making it possible for the Scopers to support collectively our great missions enterprises, Christian education, church growth and development, and benevolent ministries all over the world, beginning in Mississippi.

In my imagination I perceive CP as a "hugger" of needs, wrapping its loving arms around a desperate world and saying, "Southern Bap-



WMU exec nominations accepted through June 1

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - The search committee charged with finding the next executive director of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) is ready to accept recommendations for the position, announced Ann Coffman, chair of the committee. Recommendations will be accepted through June 1, 1999.

Current WMU executive director Dellanna W. O'Brien announced her retirement in January of this year. It is effective Sept. 1, 1999, exactly 10 years after accepting the position.

Coffman said the committee is eager to receive recommendations from all interested

Southern Baptists. The committee asks that letters of recommendation include sufficient information on a nominee, including a contact address and/or telephone number. While not necessary, a copy of a woman's resume may be submitted to the committee, Coffman said.

The executive director of WMU is responsible for directing the work of the organization's national headquarters in Birmingham, Ala.,



O'Brien

including developing and implementing an annual budget of \$15 million. She also represents the organization on multiple coordinating groups within the denominational structure of the Southern Baptist Convention. She also travels extensively, speaking frequently at Southern Baptist- and WMU-related events.

General qualifications for the position include: being a member of a Southern Baptist

church; having a working knowledge of WMU's purpose and structure; and holding undergraduate and graduate degrees in higher education.

Letters of recommendation should be mailed to: Ann Coffman, Box No. 302, 5224 State Road 46, Sanford, FL 32771.

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

Record

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COOPERATIVE PROGRAM DAY

Sunday, April 18

(please see pp. 6-7)

Brandon church victimized by arsonist

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

An arsonist set a total of 15 fires throughout Crossgates Church, Brandon, sometime early Tuesday morning, April 6 — but all the fires apparently extinguished themselves before the Brandon Fire Department arrived.

A week later, hardly any visible evidence remains that there had been a fire at all.

Crossgates pastor Barry Clingan, said it is nothing short of a miracle that none of the fires took hold and burned down all or part of the 3,500-member church facilities.

He also noted that numerous volunteers from the church came April 7-8 to clean the buildings and restore everything to normal.

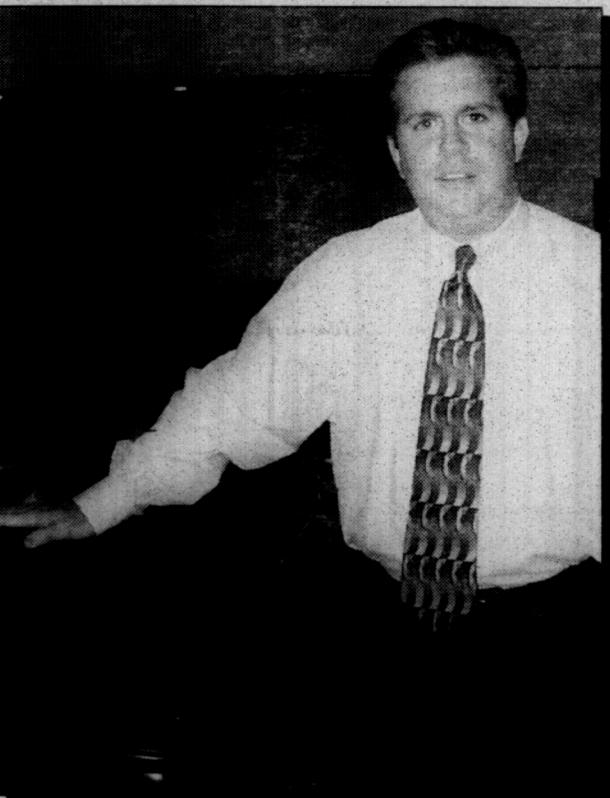
Sergeant Jeff Robertson of the Brandon Police Department said the fire is still under investigation. While they have several suspects, Robertson said they are awaiting the results of lab tests before proceeding to the next step.

The fire is also under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF), in order to determine if the church was targeted as a hate crime.

Clingan said fires were set on a pew in the sanctuary, on the pulpit, and at several places on the floor.

There was one spot on the stage, he said, where the arsonist placed a hymn book on top of a fire accelerant. "It burned all the way through the hymn book, the carpet, and even the wood floor underneath."

Fires were also started in a small



FIRE IN THE PULPIT — Barry Clingan, pastor of Crossgates Church, Brandon, stands before the pulpit in the church's sanctuary which an arsonist attempted to burn. All that remains of the burn is a small black spot (not visible in the picture), which Clingan asked to be left in the pulpit as a reminder of the incident. (Photo by Carl M. White)

realize that we have to be good custodians of our buildings but we don't worship our buildings. We worship in the buildings. These buildings are here to use. We want to wear them out.

"The other part is, and I don't want to seem too spiritual here, but a fire won't burn where a fire has already burned," Clingan said.

"There are two ways of looking at this. On the cross, Jesus took our sins and took our punishment. That fire has already been burned on Jesus, so it won't burn on us."

"Another way to look at it is, the devil's fire won't burn where God's fire is already burning. We want God's fire to be burning here (at Crossgates)."



BURNED PEW — Of the 15 locations where fires were started at Crossgates Church, Brandon, on April 6, this pew sustained the most damage. Miraculously, the hymn books and offering envelopes in the rack in front of the pew were not burned. (BR special photo)

Pearl tragedy increasing pastor's ministry

PEARL, Miss. (BP and local reports) — A pastor who helped direct the response to the first of a wave of 1997-98 school murders said while the tragedy hurts, it has enlarged his ministry.



AT THE SCENE — Tommy Mitchell, pastor of First Church, Pearl, and chaplain for the Pearl Police Department, stands before the Pearl High School sign just off Highway 80 in Pearl where many memorials were placed after the October 1997 fatal shooting of two students at the school. Mitchell's involvement in the response to the shootings has convinced him that schools and communities must be prepared for such tragedies. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Tommy Mitchell, pastor of First Church, Pearl, has helped lead about a dozen seminars around the country on forming a community-wide response to crisis. He learned how as both pastor and police department chaplain in the town of 20,000, where two students died on Oct. 1, 1997.

Such efforts must include everyone from clergy and community groups to counse-

ing agencies or social services, he said.

"I don't claim to know it all. I don't want to be a prophet of doom and gloom, but it's been proven a number of times that it can happen anywhere," Mitchell said. "It's important the community respond. It can't just be (one group). It has to be all of them."

Police summoned Mitchell to Pearl High School soon after the early morning shootings. He also had a personal interest in the situation. His son, Drew, attends the school.

Because of that connection, whenever he drops his son off at school or a friend's house, the thought hits him, "I hope I do see him later."

"That reality is there," he said. "I take what I say to him a lot more seriously. Every time I drive by that high school I pray for it, that everyone there will be safe."

Despite the awful nature of the incident, Mitchell said it didn't shake his faith in God, although he knows of others who voiced such doubts. He remains sure of God's love, noting the real answer to the tragedy lies in the mind of Luke Woodham, the teen convicted of the slayings.

While Mitchell weathered an emotional "meltdown" after a couple weeks of counseling others, the event and its aftermath have strengthened his faith.

"It made me recognize how dependent we have to be on the Lord," Mitchell said. "We have a dependence on him to get through every day. I take more seriously how important it is to walk with God."

"It also renewed for me some spiritual

truths, like in the midst of great weakness, his strength is made known. I experienced that strength, and when we're in need of comforting, that comfort is there."

However, there is another side to his experiences. Like many students and local residents, he sometimes would like to forget it ever happened.

Students aren't having problems going to school now, he said. Instead, "They are so sick of hearing about it; they hate for anybody to bring it up."

Even Mitchell tires of talking about it at times. While he appreciates the opportunity to help other towns and cities learn to deal with crisis, he doesn't care for rehashing the events of that day.

"I can't do a conference without getting a little emotional," he said. "I'm tired of having to relive it in my mind."

Mitchell, son of retired longtime Mississippi director of missions J.C. Mitchell, has spoken at both Glorieta conference center in New Mexico and Ridgecrest conference center in North Carolina.

He recently returned from a seminar sponsored by South Carolina school officials, and has spoken in a number of Mississippi churches and cities including First Church, Columbus.

Mitchell said he welcomes speaking invitations, but carefully weighs the invitations against his local responsibilities before accepting. He can be contacted at First Baptist Church, 405 N. Bierdeman Road, Pearl, MS 39208. Telephone: (601) 939-4476.

ETHNIC CLEANSING

As hard as I try, I cannot understand all of the facets of what is going on in the Balkans. I do not understand American policy — past, present, or uncertain future. For the life of me, I cannot understand all of the players in the situation or the reasons for the disagreement.

The one thing I think I understand is that the president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Milosevic, does not like Albanians. In fact, it is the president's desire that all of the

Albanians be either exterminated or run out of one of his country's states called Kosovo. The process of simply getting rid of folks you don't like is called "ethnic cleansing."

This is not an original idea, for many other dictatorial rulers have tried it. If the reports that are coming out of Kosovo and Macedonia are anywhere near accurate, those who have escaped by tractor, train, or on foot as they flee for their lives, left behind many others who were hiding and still many others who will be buried in mass graves.

Regardless of the manner, the country is being ridded of these unwanted people simply because they are different. We are all shocked, outraged, and perplexed as to what could or should be done. Historically, this kind of bitterness has existed between the groups for hundreds of years, so now NATO has decided to bomb them into changing their attitude. The entire spectacle is heartbreaking and a reminder of our immense capacity for being inhumane.

I also find it intriguing that most of us are able to analyze and condemn these actions on the other side of the world, and unable to see the social, cultural,

religious, or even marital cleansing in which we may participate.

A couple is having difficulty in their marriage and one of the partners decides it is time for the other one to be gone. The tensions build, the hostilities become stronger. Threats, intimidations, outbursts, and devious tactics are used to push the other person over the border, out of the country, and into oblivion.

When a church has a disagreement it is not unusual to see one side begin a secret military campaign to undermine and overthrow the other side. We, who are supposed to be people of love, redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation, use every tactic of guerilla warfare to destroy someone else regardless of what it takes or who might get hurt. When we do it in the church, to the rest of the world it looks about as horrible and makes about as much sense as what is happening in Kosovo.

Jesus, the heavenly optometrist, knew that all of us suffer from spiritual eye problems when he told us that we needed to take care as we try to remove a speck from the other guy's eye while walking around with a board protruding from our own eyeball. I am not suggesting that any of us are walking around shooting, burning, murdering, and taking what belongs to others, but the results can be similar.

The next time you are considering a cleansing campaign, it might be good to think about President Milosevic, or even better, it might be good to talk to Jesus.

State BSU leadership selected



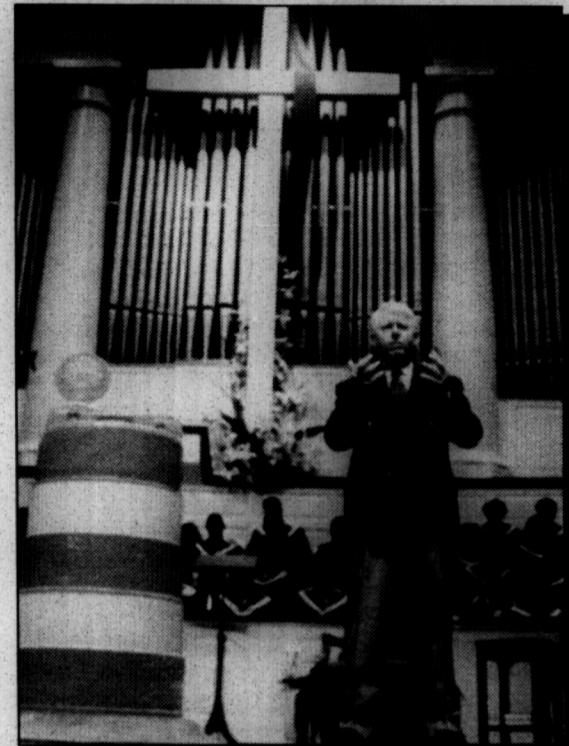
Mississippi Baptist Student Union (BSU) executive committee members were selected recently during the Leadership Training Conference At Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian, including (back row, from left) Weaver McCracken, associate director, Student Work Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB); Jerry Merriman, director, MBCB Student Work Department; Quinn Carlisle, Meridian Community College, faculty advisor; Len Ware Jr., Holmes Community College, member; David Boyd, University of Southern Mississippi, member; Benden Ginn, Easthaven Church, Brookhaven, pastor advisor; (front row, from left) Anna Teel, Blue Mountain College, president; David Wiley, Mississippi State, vice-president; Danielle Robertson, Mississippi College, secretary; Maria Titus, Gulf Coast Community College, member. (Photo by Carl M. White)

FAITH author urges Christian 'roadblocks'

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Christians should serve as roadblocks for those on the road to hell, said Bobby Welch, pastor of the church that originated the strategy that now has become the nationally-used FAITH Sunday School evangelism materials.

"People are going to hell in epidemic proportions," Welch said, "but most church members don't know how to do a thing about it."

Welch, who earned his master of divinity degree at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) and has promoted evangelism through Sunday School during his 25-year pastorate at First Church, Daytona Beach, Fla., was the lead speaker at a FAITH clinic



BLOCKING ROAD TO HELL — God uses the Bible, preachers, laymen and the cross of Christ to stand as road blocks for those on the road to Hell, Bobby Welch tells participants at the March 10 evangelism rally in New Orleans Seminary's Leavell Chapel. He received the NOBTS Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1998. (BP photo by Joe David Smith)

held at his alma mater March 8-11. The 232 participants, including 80 pastors and 12 NOBTS students, settled onto the campus to learn the evangelism strategy which integrates outreach and evangelism with the assimilation and discipleship of Sunday School.

While statistics show that 70% of Southern Baptist churches and 85% of churches of all denominations are plateaued or declining, Welch said he finds "many are committed to church growth, but not nearly that many are committed to growing the church people. We must be about training committed Great Commission Christians or we will not win the world."

Attending the clinic were pastors and laymen from 80 churches who came to receive the training themselves so they could be certified to teach the FAITH strategy at their home churches in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kansas, Colorado, and Montana. Part of the FAITH strategy is to require the pastor to be trained to use the materials before anyone else at the church may be trained.

The most unique characteristic of this clinic was that it was held apart from a sponsoring church serving as base of operations. LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention joined forces with the ministerial staff of First Church Daytona Beach and NOBTS' Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Growth to test the clinic's effectiveness in this format.

Welch was joined by three members of

his ministerial staff and several volunteers from First Church Daytona Beach who traveled to the clinic to lead teaching times and share personal testimonies. LifeWay also provided consultants for the clinic.

LifeWay has 80 FAITH clinics scheduled in 1999 in churches throughout North America and Hawaii. Though the NOBTS clinic environment was out of the ordinary, participants say the clinic was a success, giving them renewed passion for sharing their faith and enthusiasm to begin the program in their churches.

"Our kids are really burdened for their friends and are looking for a non-intimidating way to share the gospel," said Rick Deerman, youth minister at Bethel Church, Odenville, Ala. Deerman said he was impressed with LifeWay's new FAITH materials geared specifically for youth. These materials were on display for the first time during the New Orleans clinic.

Two Baptist officials whose responsibilities directly relate to evangelism in their state conventions also attended. "We are very committed to the program," said Bailey Stone, evangelism coordinator for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.



COMMITTING TO FAITH

— Participants are led March 10 in a prayer of commitment for the 80 participating pastors at New Orleans Seminary's FAITH clinic, who will take the evangelism strategy back to their churches. (BP photo by Joe David Smith)

Internet site focuses on discipleship

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — DisciplePLUS!, an Internet site produced by the adult discipleship department at LifeWay Christian Resources, is available through LifeWay's site on the World Wide Web at www.lifeway.com.

The DisciplePLUS! site provides information for 10 ministry area: Discipleship and Spiritual Growth, Marriage and Family, Women's Enrichment Ministry, Men's Ministry, Senior Adult Ministry, Single Adult Ministry, Support Groups, First Place, Prayer Ministry, and Criminal Justice Ministry. DisciplePLUS! also offers information for Fall Festivals of Marriage, Toward a Growing Marriage, Chautauquas, Christian Single Getaways, Living Proof Seminars, and other events.

This and other LifeWay sites related to specific topics may be reached by accessing the LifeWay Christian Resources home page at www.lifeway.com and clicking on the words "LifeWay Sites" in the menu on the left side of the page. The direct address for the DisciplePLUS! site is www.lifeway.com/discipleplus.

IMB allocates \$100,000 to help Kosovar refugees

IRANA, Albania (BP) — The Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) has allocated an initial \$100,000 to help minister to some of the estimated 634,000 ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing their homes in southern Yugoslavia's Kosovo province.

Southern Baptist missionaries will use the money to buy blankets and food and are assessing needs in both Albania and Macedonia to identify how they can best respond to the physical and spiritual crises the mostly Muslim refugees are facing.

Albania has absorbed much of the flood of refugees and marshaled airplanes and relief supplies over the weekend to help those who have crossed its border with Kosovo. Macedonia has refused to accept more refugees, and NATO countries organized an airlift for tens of thousands of people stranded at the border.

Ethnic Serb military forces have been driving ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo, and the flood of refugees has swollen since NATO began bombing mil-

itary and government targets in Yugoslavia in late March. Over the Easter weekend, refugees stranded at the Macedonia border huddled in a muddy field polluted with human waste and fought over precious loaves of bread. Officials feared a cholera outbreak.

Bill Steele, a Southern Baptist missionary in Bosnia, joined missionary Lee Bradley in Albania to assess the refugee situation there, said Jim Brown, IMB's consultant for human needs ministries. Missionaries Kyle and Jackie Kirkpatrick are evaluating needs in Macedonia.

The board allocated an initial \$100,000 for refugee relief efforts, primarily purchasing blankets and food, and distribution centers have been set up in the capital cities of each country, Brown said. After assessments are completed, missionaries will have a better idea how they can best respond to the spiritual and physical needs of the refugees, he said.

Bill McIntyre, a Southern Baptist missionary in Hungary,

reported Baptist workers have been ministering to about 120 Kosovars at a refugee camp near Budapest. Churches and individuals have contributed food and clothing, and teams are forming to conduct Bible storying projects among the mostly Muslim refugees.

People interested in assisting with Kosovo relief efforts may call (804) 219-1675, or mail donations to the General Relief Fund to: Office of Finance, International Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

Southern Baptists will fast and pray for 22 million people of North Korea during the 1999 Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization, scheduled from 6 p.m. Friday, May 21, to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 22.

The country has been afflicted by several years of drought and flooding, soil erosion, and crop loss. Up to 2 million North Koreans have died of hunger and related diseases since 1995, according to some estimates.

Southern Baptists have responded repeatedly to North

Korea's physical needs. Now God is calling on them to blanket the country in prayer — not because North Koreans are "on their knees" as a nation, but because he loves them, said Randy Sprinkle, director of the IMB prayer strategy office.

"We know God loves all the peoples of the earth, regardless of their situation," Sprinkle said. "We need to view the North Korean people as beloved of God and the focus of his saving grace in Christ, regardless of their current social and religious context."

After April 15, Southern Baptist churches interested in participating in the North Korea prayer emphasis can obtain a free resource kit, which includes a video and viewing guides, a prayer guide, fasting guidelines, clip art and a reprint of an article on North Korea from the IN Commission magazine.

To order the kit, e-mail customer services at customer.services@imb.org or call toll-free 1-800-866-3621.

CELEBRATE COOPERATION



CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 & BELOW

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION

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Berwick/Mississippi	\$ 5,008
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Merigold/Mid-Delta	\$ 3,665
Victoria Heights/Marshall	\$ 3,595
Mt. Pisgah/Choctaw	\$ 3,512
Eden/Yazoo	\$ 3,354
Beulah Memorial/Metro	\$ 2,930

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 - \$39,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION

Center Ridge/Kemper	CP GIFTS \$ 8,750
New Hope/Webster	\$ 7,054
Oldtown/Calhoun	\$ 6,495
Cornersville/Union County	\$ 5,057
Linn/Mid-Delta	\$ 4,955
Lollars Grove/Webster	\$ 4,646
Union/Franklin	\$ 4,448
Wayside/Yalobusha	\$ 4,371
Rolling Hills/Pearl River	\$ 4,358
Wake Forest/Golden Triangle	\$ 4,257

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$40,000 - \$54,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION

Temple Heights/Lafayette	CP GIFTS \$ 8,852
Liberty/Lauderdale	\$ 8,510
Sabougla/Calhoun	\$ 8,042
New Prospect/Tishomingo	\$ 7,934
Oak Grove/Yazoo	\$ 7,862
Unity/Greene	\$ 7,501
Pilgrims Rest/Panola	\$ 7,431
Locust Hill/Pontotoc	\$ 6,469
FBC, Mt. Olive/Covington-Jeff Davis	\$ 6,461
Tula/Lafayette	\$ 6,405

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$55,000 - \$74,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION

FBC, State Line/Wayne	CP GIFTS \$13,529
FBC, Anguilla/Sharkey-Issaquena	\$13,178
Zion/Pontotoc	\$11,203
Emmanuel/Marion	\$10,407
Mesa/Walthall	\$10,335
Hebron/North Central	\$10,289
Shubuta/Clarke	\$10,209
FBC, Lumberton/Lamar	\$ 9,958
McCool/Attala	\$ 9,426
Valley Park/Sharkey-Issaquena	\$ 9,100

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$75,000 - \$99,999

CHURCH/ASSOCIATION

Causeyville/Lauderdale	CP GIFTS \$19,701
FBC, Sand Hill/Greene	\$18,142
Big Creek/Calhoun	\$17,582
Calvary/Lawrence	\$17,324
Spring Creek/Neshoba	\$17,143
Cherry Creek/Pontotoc	\$16,370
FBC, Galilee/Mississippi	\$15,522
Calvary/Winston	\$15,457
Pine Grove/Jones	\$14,595
East Fork/Mississippi	\$14,257

Church Offering Categories based on undesignated gifts reported on the Annual Church Profile (Oct. 97- Sept. 98)

Pastors speak out on Cooperative Program

"My philosophy is that this (Cooperative Program) is the way God wants us to spread the Gospel. The more you give the more you keep God's word moving and reaching. What we designate to the Cooperative Program we are not going to miss. God is going to more than replace it."

Ernest Allen, Causeyville Church, Lauderdale Association

"FBC Yazoo City has always been a mission minded church. We believe that the Cooperative Program is the best means available to support missions. The Cooperative Program is a very important part of our desire as a church to maintain a balanced approach to missions both at home and abroad."

David Raddin, First Church, Yazoo City

"I have traveled a good deal of the world, preaching in South America, the Middle East, and elsewhere. The more I saw what we do, the more I wanted to see it continued. I have always seen the Cooperative Program as a good means through which we can take the gospel across the world."

Gordon L. Sansing, Sr., Center Ridge Church, Kemper Association

"I've been a pastor of a Southern Baptist Church for over 30 years, since 1964. I have supported Cooperative Program as what I believe is the biblical basis for missions in the church. New Hebron has a strong history of missions support. I'm just blessed to be part of a church that believes in missions and supports missions. I heard that there were some efforts in the past to lower our Cooperative Program support, but the church never went along with it."

David Wilkinson, New Hebron Church, Lawrence Association

(Wilkinson has been pastor of New Hebron for four months.
New Hebron gives 25% of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program.)

Briar Hill grows, keeps CP on track

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

When Malcolm Pinion first drove around the curve and saw Briar Hill Church in Rankin County, he thought to himself, "No way am I coming here, but the Lord had something else in mind."

Now in his sixth year as pastor at Briar Hill, Pinion has seen the church grow from around 150 in Sunday School to around 300. The budget has grown from around \$235,000 a year to the current budget of over \$525,000.

He also led the church in removing their old sanctuary built in 1881 and building a \$1.5 million sanctuary and three-story education facility — while maintaining a Cooperative Program (CP) support level of 22% of undesignated receipts.

Pinion said that during the entire planning and construction process they never considered cutting CP support. "It was not going to happen, at least not unless as a very last resort."

Pinion indicated there is strong support for the CP as the means for supporting missions in the church. The church's commitment of 22% of undesignated receipts to CP is double the Mississippi Baptist average of 11%.

Briar Hill also gives 2% of undesignated receipts to Rankin Association, and sends \$500 a month to Grace Mission in Rankin County.

"These are missions-minded people," Pinion said. This summer the youth are participating in two World Changer projects. The men of the church make one or two mission trips a year. This summer they are going Colorado to help build a church.

"These are people who made a conscious choice to tear down an old facility and build a new one, while supporting missions," Pinion

said. He anticipated that there could be serious opposition because of emotional attachment to the old sanctuary. However, that was not the case.

"There were only four opposing votes," Pinion said. "I had one of the older, leading men of the church tell me, after it was explained to him about how people are moving out this way and building new houses, that he didn't see where the church had any choice if we were going to reach people."

"This is the kind of attitude I have found among the people of Briar Hill."

A way was found, however, to memorialize the old historic building in the new building. There are two stained glass windows in the foyer, one depicting the old building, the other the newer building.

"People have really appreciated these windows," Pinion said.

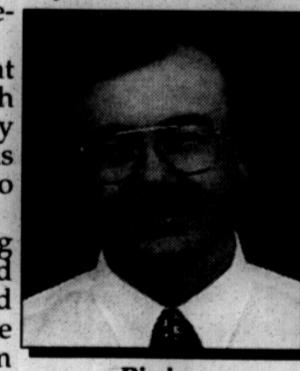
When Pinion came six years ago, he ordered a demographic profile from the state convention board. "The demographics indicated there were over 5,000 people now living within a three-mile radius of the church."

"I went to the oldest man in our church and asked him how many people did he think lived around the church. He said, 'Well, preacher, I reckon there are about 600,'" Pinion recalled.

It took almost two years from the removal of the old structure until they moved into the new building. During that time they met in the fellowship hall, a brick building that was next to the old sanctuary.

"The two-year construction time seemed long, but it gave us the opportunity to grow in our giving. Thus, we didn't have to borrow as much," Pinion said.

Current indebtedness is around \$600,000, but Pinion expects this to go down quickly because the people of Briar Hill have a heart for giving.



Pinion

Glorietta, Ridgecrest undergo name changes



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2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) conference centers are changing their names and expanding their conference offerings to better reflect the vision and ministry of their parent agency — LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Effective April 1, the new name for the Southern Baptist owned-and-operated facilities will be LifeWay Conference Center at Glorieta and LifeWay Conference Center at Ridgecrest.

Glorietta and Ridgecrest have been providing LifeWay-staffed and -coordinated leadership conferences for decades, primarily in the summer months.

Some of the more popular events include Sunday School leadership conferences, discipleship conferences, church music week, and Centrifuge camps for youth.

LifeWay has conducted research to better determine customer needs, provided more customer service training for employees and hired event planning directors at both conference centers — Wendell Newman at Glorieta and Tommy Gilmore at Ridgecrest.

"Our goal is to design practical and relevant conferences and events which appeal to contemporary evangelical believers," Gilmore said.

"We want people to experience a sense of community while they're on campus and leave feeling challenged to be more Christlike. As they return home, we want them motivated to make a positive impact in their families, churches and communities," he added.

Several new events are already in the works. At Ridgecrest, a conference scheduled May 14-16 is designed to provide women with a fresh encounter with God through Bible study, worship, music, reflection, and community building. "God's Design for Women" will feature Christian author and nationally known speaker Debby Jones of Columbia, S.C., and Susan Hunt of Marietta, Ga., an author and director of

women's ministry for the Christian Education and Publications Committee of the Presbyterian Church in America.

That event will be followed by "Revisiting Your Call" on May 17-19.

This conference, targeted to ministers and spouses, features "Experiencing God" author Henry Blackaby and will touch on how to live a life of holiness, keys to an effective prayer life, and how to establish and maintain spiritual integrity in ministry, among other topics.

Twice a year, Ridgecrest also plans to offer "Your Church Staff Retreat," designed to offer time and experiences for staff bonding, calendar planning, relationship building and spiritual counseling.

Nationally recognized pastors will address participants, while ministry consultants also will be available to meet one-on-one with church staffs.

Staying Well

Skin Cancer: Know the Facts

Skin cancer continues to be a major health problem among Americans. According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately half of all new cancers diagnosed in Americans is skin cancer, with about 1 million new cases each year. The two most common types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Basal cell carcinoma accounts for more than 90% of all skin cancers in the U.S., but is a slow-growing cancer that seldom spreads to other parts of the body. Squamous cell carcinoma is more rare, but is more likely to spread than the basal cell variety.

Another type of skin cancer is melanoma, which can occur on any skin surface. In men, it is often found on the torso, head or neck; in women, it often develops on the lower legs. The chance of developing melanoma increases with age, but this disease can affect people of all ages. Melanoma is one of the most common cancers among young adults.

Warning signs might include changes on the skin, especially a new growth or a sore that doesn't heal. The sore may take a variety of forms, appearing as a small, shiny, waxy lump, or a firm, red lump. Sometimes the lump bleeds or develops a crust. Skin cancer can also start as a flat, red spot that is rough, dry or scaly. Skin cancer may occur anywhere on the body, but areas that are exposed to the sun are at greatest risk.

While early detection is the best prevention against skin cancer, it's also important to honor those who have battled or are battling cancer. Baptist will observe Cancer Survivors Day on Saturday, June 5, from 12:30-2:30 p.m. in the Colonnades Medical Office Building, located on the north side of Baptist Medical Center. The day's events include food, fellowship and entertainment, featuring host Woodie Assaf of WLBT. Join us as we celebrate victories over cancer and commit ourselves to helping those who are still fighting.

Understanding the Benefits of Skin Cancer Awareness

For more information, call the Baptist Health Line at 1-800-948-6262.

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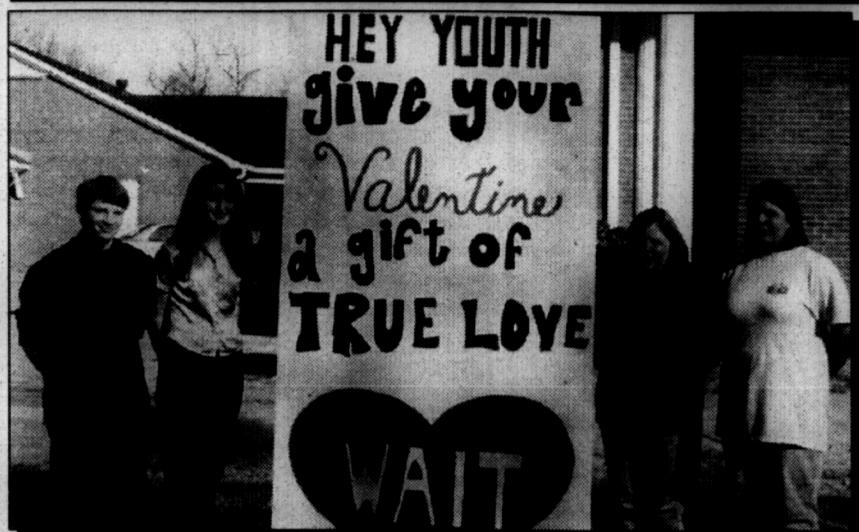
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Church _____ Associate _____
Number of people _____ X \$26 Total _____

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For more information and to register, contact:
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800 748-1664 or 662-292-3823

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Youth of First Church, Boyle, made a giant valentine card in conjunction with True Love Waits. Pictured (from left) are Michael Grammer, Lola Crawford, Denise Beaver, and Rachel Therrell. Louis Holloway is the youth director.

Flowood Church, Brandon, will hold its annual Golf Tournament on April 24 at Willow Creek Golf Course. For more information, call Janice Cook, at (601) 992-3711 (evenings).

Leake County youth choir recently returned from their spring break tour and ski trip. The choir consisted of 60 7th-12th graders with 16 adults traveling with them. The choir was the effort of five local churches: First, Carthage; Trinity, Carthage; Carthage United Methodist; Madden, Madden; and Corinth, Singleton.

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Winston County Crusade for Christ will be held at the Louisville Coliseum May 2-7 at 7 p.m. each night. Evangelist will be Bill Bozeman from Mobile, Ala. Music evangelist will be Gerald and Cindy Simmons from Gulfport. For more information, call Tim Parker at (601) 773-6398.

Glade, Laurel: April 18-21; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Tommy Mitchell, speaker; Keith Davis, music; Mike Thompson, pastor.

Unity, West: April 15-17; 7 p.m.; Jerry Jackson, Sturgis, evangelist; Skipper Maxwell, music; Jessie Scott Jr., pastor.

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Baptist Health Systems will hold its first-ever "Protect, Detect & Survive" cancer awareness day on June 5 at Baptist Medical Center in Jackson. Screenings will be held by appointment from 9 a.m. noon, with pre-registration information sent to participants prior to the event. To register for "Protect, Detect & Survive," or for more information, call the Baptist Health Line at 1-800-948-6262. The day's activities will also include the annual observance of Cancer Survivors' Day

from 12:30-2:30 p.m. in the conference room of the Colonnades Medical Office Building.

Temple Church, Petal, will have a special dedication service for completion of the remodeling of the church grounds and facilities at the 11 a.m. worship service on April 18. Open house and refreshments will follow the services.

Calvary Church, Cleveland, recently had a note burning. The church bought six acres of land, built an entire church plant, and bought a staff member home. In all the church had spent over a million dollars with most of it being borrowed. The original note was in the amount of \$350,000. Since the note burning the church has been able to purchase a new van, and remain free of debt. Pictured (from left) are Mike Easley, deacon; Bob Hill, pastor of 20 years; and George Barefoot, chairman of deacons.



Calvary, Cleveland, note burning

REVIVAL DATES

Union, Brandon: April 17-20; Sunday, 11 a.m.; Sat., Mon., and Tues., 7 p.m.; Homer Martinez, evangelist; Jasper Butler, music; Brent Bozeman, pastor.

Calvary, Silver Creek: April 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Dale Authement, Jayess, evangelist; Tim Morrison, Monticello, music; Leon Wallace, pastor.

Yale Street, Cleveland: April 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Rick Coram, Ocala, Fla., evangelist; Brent and Erica Murray, Acworth, Ga., music.

Parkway, Houston: April 25-28; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon services and 7 p.m.; Sonny Adkins, director, Evangelism Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; T. R. Darsey, Winona, music; H. Gregg Thomas, pastor.

South McComb (Pike): April 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Gary Bowlin, Brandon, evangelist; Ken Hedgepeth, Monticello, music; Ted Bowlin, pastor.

Wess Chapel, Louisville: April 18-21; 7 p.m. nightly;

Donnie Guy, Gulfport, evangelist;

Scott Prater, Louisville, music; Tim Parker, pastor.

Miss. Baptist college news

Haydn's Creation will be performed by Mississippi College Concert Chorale in Swor Auditorium on April 19 at 7:30 p.m. The performance celebrates the 200th anniversary of the public premiere of Haydn's timeless oratorio, which dramatically retells the story of God's work in the creation of the world. For more information call (601) 925-3440.

The Mississippi College office of continuing education will offer a GMAT review course. The cost of this course is \$125. It will be held on April 24 at 8:30 a.m. For additional information, call Mary Lea Nations at (601) 925-3264.

W. H. Barnett, age 68, dies

Warren Hascal "Bud" Barnett of Carriere died March 22 in Picayune. Funeral services were held March 24 at Goodyear Church, Picayune. Barnett, 68, was on the staff of Pearl River Association for three years. He is survived by his wife Bobbie Daughdrill Barnett of Carriere; daughters, Judy Clements, Saucier; Kay Lafferty, Carriere; sisters, Ethel Gordon, Wilma Slade, Mary Walker, Vivian Stanford, all of Poplarville; and brother, Buster Barnett, also of Poplarville.

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SBC day camp explores 'I Can Do It, Too!'

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—Special activities are planned again this year for children of parents attending the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta. The "I Can Do It, Too!" day camp will be Tuesday and Wednesday, June 15-16.

The day camp is for boys and girls who will have completed grades one through six by June of this year. Registration is open to the first 200 children, and pre-registration is available by calling the LifeWay Christian Resource Center Advanced Registration line at (800) 254-2022 or through the Internet at www.registration@lifeway.com.

This year the cost is \$70. The schedule is Tuesday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (lunch included) and Wednesday 8 a.m. to noon. Parents will be required to sign a medical release for their children.

Volunteers staff the day camp, and anyone who is interested in volunteering should call (770) 704-0267.

Homecomings

Calvary, Durant: April 18; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; noon meal; The Sons of Faith featured in afternoon singing; Aubrey McLellan pastored Eastside Baptist Mission in 1955-56 which later became Calvary Church, guest speaker; Willie Bishop, pastor.

Harmony (Carroll): April 25; services, 10:30 a.m.; dinner on the grounds at noon; annual cemetery association meeting with election of officers; George Smith, director of missions, speaker; Ken Gower, pastor.



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IRS denial of church tax exemption upheld

WASHINGTON (BP) — A federal judge has upheld the loss of tax-exempt status for a church that warned Christians about voting for Bill Clinton for president, leading critics of the ruling to issue their own warnings to other congregations.

In supporting the revocation of the tax exemption of The Church at Pierce Creek in Vestal, N.Y., federal judge Paul Friedman of the District of Columbia said the IRS clearly may do so when an organization "publishes an advertisement in opposition to a candidate for public office," according to The Washington Times.

It is the first IRS ruling stripping the tax exemption of a church not accused of being a "sham church" or whose sincerity was unchallenged, Friedman wrote, but he also said there was no proof of a previous incident where a church "so brazenly claimed responsibility for a political advertisement in a national newspaper and solicited tax-deductible donations" for it. The Times reported.

The IRS ruled against the church in 1995 after a two-year investigation of advertisements in USA Today and The Washington Times four days before the 1992 election. In those issues, the church and others sponsored the same full-page ad under the title "Christian Beware." The ad warned Christians not to "put the economy ahead of the Ten Commandments." It asked how Christians could vote for Clinton, citing his support of abortion, homosexual rights and condom distribution in schools, as well as scriptures opposing such positions.

"The Bible warns us to not follow another man in his sin, nor help him promote sin — lest God chasten us," the ad said. It did not endorse either of the other candidates, incumbent President George Bush or Ross Perot.

A Southern Baptist public-policy specialist called Friedman's March 30 decision an "atrocious."

"It is very scary when the government starts going after legitimate churches simply because it does not approve of the content of the church's free speech," said Will Dodson, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) director of public policy.

"In my opinion, the government has no right and should have no right to monitor the activities of a church and

penalize that church for activities which the government deems political," he said.

Mark Troobnick, one of the lawyers who argued for the church, said "there is a definite reason for churches to be concerned about what the government is trying to do."

In this kind of situation, "churches start censoring themselves" because they do not know when they will cross the IRS' line, he said.

"(T)he liberal churches should be just as concerned as the conservative churches, because what's good for the goose is good for the gander," said Troobnick, a lawyer for the American Center for Law and Justice.

The church's lawyers "showed many, many, many examples of . . . Democratic candidates campaigning in churches without any incidents," but Friedman made a "bright-line distinction" in his ruling between what is said from the pulpit and what a

church says in an ad, Troobnick said. Neither the IRS nor the Supreme Court has made such a distinction, Troobnick said.

The executive director of the organization that filed the original complaint against the church applauded the decision.

"Pierce Creek had a simple choice: Work as a non-partisan, tax-exempt church or engage in partisan politicking and forfeit its tax exemption," said Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "The church's leaders can't have their cake and eat it too."

"Churches have every right to speak out on important issues of the day, but that's not what was involved in this case," Lynn said in a written statement. "It's impossible to reasonably argue that taking out a full-page political advertisement urging people to vote against a candidate is non-partisan."

The ERLC's Dodson said, "Those who claim to believe in separation of church and state

and yet support this kind of government harassment lose all credibility as far as I am concerned.

"Furthermore, it would be one thing if the government had decided to tax the church based upon the amount of money that was expended toward a political campaign, but it is absolutely ridiculous that it would have the power to now tax all funds of the church even though 95% or better of those funds are used for activities that even the government deems appropriate."

Dan Little, who was the church's pastor in 1992, told The Times the church's "concerns were moral. When moral concerns get mixed up in political language, that still doesn't take it outside the church's domain."

An appeal will be filed, Troobnick said.

Randall Terry, founder of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, was a member of the church when the ad was placed.

STAFF CHANGES

Thirty-eighth Avenue Church, Hattiesburg, has called Bradley White as minister of music. White received his education at William Carey College and is pursuing a master of music degree at New Orleans Seminary. He previously served at First Church of Runnelstown,



White

Petal G. Wiley Abel is pastor of 38th Avenue Church.

Horseshoe Church, Tchula, has called Kerry Burrough as pastor effective March 21. He was previously pastor of Simmons Memorial, Flora.

James E. Messer Sr. has become staff evangelist for Cypress Shores Church, Mobile, Ala. He previously served as staff evangelist for First Church, Theodore, Ala. Messer may be reached at 1-800-653-6652 or (334) 661-9631.



Futral

Country Woods Church, Metro Association, has called Rob Futral as pastor. He is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in New Testament. Futral previously served as pastor of Edgewater Church, New Orleans.

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John 6:1-59

By Beth W. Cape

The boy loved days like this when he could go exploring. Lately there had been some excitement in his village. There was a man named Jesus who was healing people!

One day the boy had been close enough in the crowd to see the look of love on Jesus' face as he talked to a poor man who couldn't walk. Suddenly the lame man picked up his bed and walked away. How amazed the boy was to see a miracle right before his very eyes! He wasn't sure if it really happened or if it were some kind of trick.



Cape

He decided to try to follow Jesus to hear more of his stories and see if he could see any more miracles. He could just feel in his bones that there was something special about this man. As he walked along, looking for Jesus he discovered that there were other people looking for him, too. They finally found him on a hillside by the Sea of Galilee.

There was a lot of talk in the crowd that day. Some people were saying that Jesus' special friend, John the Baptist, had been brutally killed that morning by King Herod's men. Other people were talking about peo-

ple they knew who had been healed by Jesus. One woman said that she had been at a wedding where Jesus had turned water into wine! An old man said that he had been told by a friend that knew one of the disciples, that Jesus had actually walked on water!

The boy listened carefully to all the talk. He was just a small boy so it was easy for him to wander around in the crowd and work his way near to Jesus.

The boy heard Jesus ask the disciples where they could get food for all these people. One of the disciples named Phillip said that it would take much money to buy food for all those people.

Suddenly a thoughtful look came on the boy's face. He remembered his bread and fish. His stomach was starting to growl. He couldn't very well

open up his lunch and start eating when no one else had any food, his mother had taught him better manners than that!

He didn't know what to do but he knew that Jesus didn't have any food. Maybe Jesus could use his food! It wasn't much but the boy remembered all the stories that he had heard about Jesus. He knew that the people around might make fun of him, but he knew Jesus wouldn't make fun of him.

He looked at Jesus once more and knew what he had to do. The little boy went to the disciple named Phillip and asked him to give Jesus everything he had; two loaves of bread and five fishes.

It wasn't much but he gave it willingly, everything he had. Because of this small boy's gift, Jesus gave bread and fish to more than 5,000 people. Because of this boy's gift, Jesus

was able to teach his disciples an important lesson in faith, and even today he still uses this story to teach us the same important lesson of faith.

William Barclay says, "Jesus needs what we can bring him. It may not be much but he needs it. It may well be that the world is denied miracle after miracle and triumph after triumph because we will not bring to Jesus what we have and what we are. If we would lay ourselves on the altar of His service, there is no saying what he could do with us and through us. We may be sorry and embarrassed that we have not more to bring, and rightly so; but that is no reason for failing to bring what we have. Little is always much in the hands of Christ."

Cape is director of children and family ministry at First Church, Picayune.

LIFE AND WORK

Through depression to hope

1 Kings 19

By Doug Bain

Eager Bible students often find in Scripture a treasure trove of all kinds of information. Some propose to find a storehouse of scientific data and some find there a textbook of psychology. We eventually learn, however, that Scripture is a library about the ways of God with mankind and mankind's response. Even though scripture is not a text book of psychology, there is extensive insight about deep interior experience. Many biblical writers suffered from inner distress and emotional pain, even a persistent experience of the "valley of the shadow." This was true for faithful Elijah, the very one seen later by Israel as her supreme prophet, yet the very one suffering despondency.



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Depression can arise from many sources, such as loss, failure, anger, injustice, and unmet expectations. A close reading of the text can trace the move through depression toward hope.

Anyone can get depressed (vv. 1-5a). After the victory under god at Mt. Carmel, Elijah fled for his life from Jezebel's threat. Reaching the southern limits of Judah, Elijah sat down under a desert shrub and said, "I have had enough — take me out." In his fear and frustration, he went two steps further to conclude that his work was in vain and therefore his life was not worth the effort. He then "fell asleep," with the drowsiness that often accompanied depression. A man of faith became depressed

when life seemed to cave in on him. Even though there was evidence that pointed toward hope and confidence in the triumph of God's purposes, still depression descended. Such an experience slips in the back door and overwhelms many a faithful believer.

Depression calls for caring (vv. 5b-8). God in his providence provided care for Elijah. Attention to basic routines and basic necessities, attention to physical as well as emotional care, are crucial to breaking the cycle of despair. Travel to a meaningful location can also serve as good therapy. The journey to Mt. Horeb (apparently Mt. Sinai where God had established his covenant with Israel) was some 250 miles beyond Beersheba. The "40 days and nights" is a span of time which God sustains his servants, as he did for Moses and for Jesus.

God's presence provides

hope (vv. 9b-12). God called Elijah to attention with one simple question: "What are you doing here?" That question unleashed a flood of self pity, characteristic of depression. It also opened up on Elijah's mistaken perspective on his circumstances. "I am the only one left, and they are about to wipe me off the face of the earth." After God allowed him to express his feelings, he then invited Elijah to witness the divine presence in a way that showed Elijah's false expectations. He was looking for evidence of God in powerful, dynamic displays of incredible force. "No, not there, Elijah." Then comes "a gentle whisper" and a sense of the presence of God in a way least expected. God gets to the source of depressive conclusions by "cognitive restructuring," showing how far our expectations are wide of the mark. The unexpected presence of God is in the gentle whisper, with the gift of his presence, correcting false assumptions.

God offers fulfillment (vv.

15-16). God's perceptive question about why Elijah was escaping implied he had not been sent to Sinai. (He may have gone to ask for judgment on Israel for the broken covenant.) Elijah had opportunity to revise his answer, yet he showed the same negative assessment and self pity. God intervened with another installment in the healing process by giving Elijah meaningful work to do. "Return and continue your work as a prophet to the Hebrews." Those who are submerged in despondency are invited by this text to encounter God's personal presence and find their place in his work. God empowers believers to be faithful, even within depression. This is part of his wise intervention for our healing. He is the "still small voice," which requires a new level of listening, so as to move us through depression toward hope.

Bain is chairman and professor of the Biblical Division at Blue Mountain College.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

All I need

Psalm 23

By Ken Hester



The twenty-third Psalm rushes special memories to each of our minds. Henry Ward Beecher once wrote, "It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them."

This short psalm of David encourages the believer to rest in the care of the Good Shepherd. God provides, secures, and loves those in his flock. As believers we are owned twice: first, at creation, then at salvation. Being



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his, we can celebrate his activity in our lives.

God provides (23:1-2). "I shall not want" actually means, "I shall not lack." This statement does not mean life will be easy. This statement, however, does make a statement of faithful contentment with the Master's provision.

Phillip Keller, in his book *A Shepherd's Look at Psalm 23*, wrote that sheep need four necessary conditions to lie down in the green pastures. They need to be free from fear since their only defense is running. They need to be free from friction within the flock. When the butting order is being set, an unsuspecting butt can cause great damage. They also need

freedom from pest and insects. They finally need to be free from hunger. Sheep will look for food until they find it. Sheep only lay down with full stomachs in green pastures.

The Shepherd also provides still waters. Keller wrote, "If not led to the good water supplies of clean, pure water, they (sheep) will often end up drinking from the polluted pot holes where they pick up such internal parasites as nematodes, liver flukes or other disease germs." For this reason, God provides his sheep with deep streams full of living water.

God secures (23:3-4). When we look at this psalm from a sheep's point of view, we readily understand the need for restoration. Sheep can sometimes become casts. Keller wrote that a cast sheep is one that has rolled over on its back

and cannot roll back to its legs. They will begin to kick in the air unable to move. Gases build up in the rumen, blood circulation stops, and the sheep become vulnerable to predators.

The Shepherd sometimes finds us on our backs, unable to move and vulnerable to predators. He then comes to set us on our feet and either puts us to work to reduce the spiritual fat or shears our excess activities from our lives.

When walking with God down the path of righteousness, there will be times when we walk through a valley. The word "through" means that God does not leave us in the valley, but walks with us from one end to the other. Valleys are a part of our journey of faith. David fought Goliath in the valley. After the transfiguration, Jesus led those disciples down the mountain into the valley. The valley may contain the shadow of death, but believers

should not fear shadows. Our boldness in these valleys is due to God's presence and his protection of us while we are there. His security proves his love.

God loves (23:5-6). He prepared a place at his table, when Satan left us to starve. God demonstrates total acceptance by anointing our head with oil. This ancient custom was a sign of welcoming at the table. Satan left us abandoned. God satisfies our souls. The phrase "my cup runneth over" actually means "being fully saturated with quality in life."

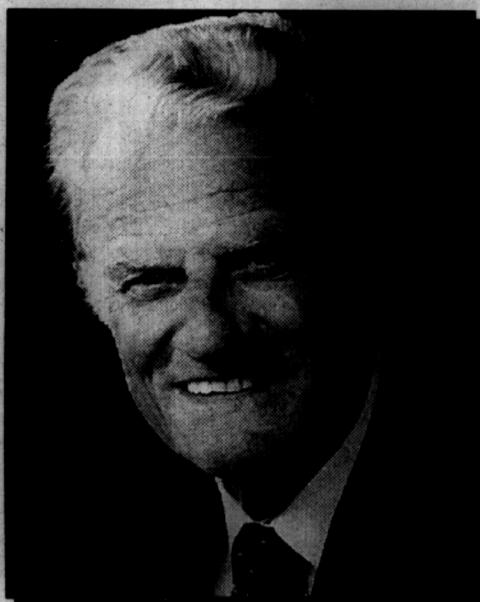
Notice the results David mentions due to God's encompassing care "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." The believer can have confidence in God in this life. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The believer also can commit to being with the One who is this good.

Hester is pastor of Mantee Church, Mantee.

NAMB Graham documentary recognized

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. (BP) — The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) broadcast communications group has won several awards recently, including one from Movie-Guide magazine and five from the cable Telly Awards.

"Common Ground," a documentary on the life and influence of Billy Graham, received the Swiss America Golden Eagle Award for outstanding redemptive documentary at the seventh annual Movie Guide awards banquet held March 18.



Graham

Produced by NAMB's broadcast communications group for the ABC television network, the program featured testimonies from former U.S. presidents and cabinet members, entertainers, and Olympic athletes on the impact of Graham's influence in their lives.

"Common Ground" also was one of five finalists for the Epiphany Prizes for the Most Inspiring Movie and Television Programs, which were won by the "Seventh Heaven" series, Warner Brothers Television, and "The Prince of Egypt," DreamWorks Pictures.

The purpose of the Epiphany Prizes, sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, is to encourage the production of feature films and television programs which are uplifting, inspirational and acknowledging of God, his love, his mercy and his grace.

MovieGuide is a publication of Good News Communications, a ministry dedicated to redeeming the values of the media according to biblical principles by influencing media executives.

Five NAMB programs also were awarded Classic Telly Awards in a special competition commemorating the 20th anniversary of the awards, which recognize outstanding non-network and cable TV programs. The programs include:

- ◆ "Circle of the Earth," 1996, highlighting the religious faith of astronauts and others involved in America's space program.

- ◆ "Wings As Eagles," 1994, about life on a U.S. aircraft carrier.

- ◆ "Ralph Carmichael's Big Band Christmas," 1997, a live Christmas concert of big band jazz featuring special guest star Margaret Becker.

- ◆ "True North," 1997, featuring Canadians who share a deep, personal, spiritual faith.

- ◆ "Ken Davis: Lighten Up," 1997, a live concert compilation of speaker, comedian and best-selling author Ken Davis' favorite stories.

Videos of the programs can be ordered from NAMB's media offices in Fort Worth, Texas, by calling (800) 777-1127 or via e-mail to wcockrell@namb.net.

Seminary students tapped as Graham counselors

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — When Billy Graham comes to Indianapolis for a crusade June 3-6, he'll be joined by more than 160 counselors from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

To prepare for their assignment, Southern students attended a one-day instructional seminar March 22 led by Gary Cobb, coordinator of counseling and follow-up for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

"What better way to prepare a student for evangelism than real application and practice," said Don Cox, instructor of evangelism and church growth in Southern's Billy Graham School of Evangelism, Missions and Church Growth. Cox is also the seminary's coordinator for participation in the crusade.

Cox said the training prepared students for seed-planting and harvesting alongside the ministry of a man who has proven his passion and his faithfulness for bringing the message of the cross to a world in need in a way they will understand.

The counselors also will be responsible for seeing that converts are "plugged into a local

church," he said.

Southern was chosen as a source for counselors because of the seminary's ties to Graham and Graham's relationship with Southern's president, R. Albert Mohler Jr., Cox said. Another factor was Jim Bohrer, a Billy Graham crusade associate and a 1998 graduate of Southern's Billy Graham School.

Bohrer said counselors usually come from the immediate area near a crusade. But his desire to pull in Southern students was rooted in the institution's emphasis on evangelistic outreach.

Focusing on methodology, the seminar addressed the need for personal preparation and an intimate relationship with Christ. Bohrer said one intention of the initial preparation is to challenge the counselors in the basics of their own Christian life. "Unless you have a vital life with God," he said, "you have nothing to share."

The overall purpose of the training session was to introduce students to the methods used by Graham for counseling and follow-up.

Kim Robertson, an M.Div. student at Southern from

Floyds Knobs, Ind., described the seminar as particularly beneficial because of its personal application and her strong anticipation for the event.

"I chose to participate for two reasons," she said, "To see Dr. Graham's ministry firsthand and to be a part of its impact in

reaching others for Christ."

The June 3-6 Billy Graham Indiana Crusade will be held in the RCA Dome in downtown Indianapolis.

For more information, contact the crusade office at (317) 577-4242 or visit the Internet site, www.IndianaCrusade.org.



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

I don't really see teen drinking as a major problem. Since it's legal for adults, teenagers should learn about it anyway. All of you adults should stop being so self-righteous.

You want to learn about drinking? Let's start with what we already know. List the advantages to drinking — it tastes good, it relaxes you, it takes the edge off stress, it allows you to have fun with your friends. Name more advantages. Now list some of the disadvantages to drinking: decreased awareness of what's going on around you, DUI arrest, date rape, injury, liver disease, death (yours or someone else's at your hands). Name other disadvantages. If you've already made up your mind, you're probably going to drink no matter what any adult says, so the law is there to provide protection like a fence around a corral. That is, to keep the occupants of the corral from hurting themselves in areas they shouldn't go, as well as to keep out predators. When you choose

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

Hate groups grow in cyberspace

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (ABP) — The number of Internet sites promoting racial hatred rose by more than 55% in 1998, according to a report issued by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

The group counted 254 hate sites on the Internet in 1998 compared with 163 in 1997.

The organization defines a hate site as one that uses "racist or anti-Semitic content or promotes a group known to be racist or anti-Semitic," said SPLC spokeswoman Laurie Wood.

In addition to their growing

visibility in cyberspace, hate groups are experiencing an upsurge in numbers, the SPLC reported. It identified 537 hate groups or hate-group chapters in 1998, up from 474 in 1997.

Racist groups are receiving encouragement from the halls of academia, the SPLC report said: "Race scientists contending that blacks are inherently less intelligent than whites and more prone to crime, have fueled extremist groups that use the scientists' work to justify their hatred and demeaning of non-whites."